The Congregationalist

Photo by Louis Fulmer, Cheyenne

FELLOWSHIP AT MEAL TIME
1961 ANNUAL MEETING

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"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free." — Galatians 5:1

The Congregationalist

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EDITORIAL COMMENTS

When Dr. Max Strang in his Moderator's Address at the opening of the Seventh Annual Meeting of the National Association at Cheyenne on August 22, 1961, made the forthright declaration that the Churches which have not entered the United Church of Christ are the true Congregational Christian Churches of the United States, and that the National Association is their national headquarters, he set the true keynote of the meeting. The resolution adopted by the Association a few days later, reaffirming these words and declaring that the General Council of Congregational Christian Churches, by merging itself into the United Church of Christ, had lost its separate identity and that the Churches which are still Congregational henceforth have for their denominational headquarters the National Association, can be classified as one of the truly great modern documents of religious freedom.

What the church historian of the future will say about this meeting we cannot now fully predict, but for those who were present, it stands out as a time which will ever be remembered. The few people who were present both at the Philadelphia meeting of the General Synod of the United Church of Christ on July 4, 1961, and at the Cheyenne meeting of the National Association, departed to their homes fully convinced that August 24 was far worthier of the comparison with July 4, 1776, than was that sad day at Philadelphia.

Every serious American knows that the Declaration of Independence would have been but a scrap of paper if it had not been for the determined struggle and sacrifices of the ensuing years. It is equally true that the truths set forth that day in 1776 presented the new-born nation with a responsibility to make the words live in the character of a people.

Our Responsibilities Today and Tomorrow

The same truths repeat themselves. Without sacrifice the 1961 Declaration of Congregational Independence will remain but a scrap of paper. We shall not be called upon, like the patriots of the 18th Century, to resist unto blood, but we have our sacrifices to make nevertheless. True Christians who believe in the Congregational Way have often had to undergo hardship as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, and Dr. Butman's address at Cheyenne showed us that the years of greatest sacrifice were the creative years of our history.

The vote which authorized the Executive Committee to undertake to raise a budget nearly double that of the past year spells out for us all what one of these sacrifices must be. Even more challenging was the proposal of the Pilgrim Fellowship that our Churches go in for an unprecedented expansion in missionary activity. From the days when the Apostle Paul urged his Churches to give liberally for their suffering brethren even at great cost to themselves, down to our own day, genuine Christianity has involved the sacrifice of material resources.

The farmers and backwoodsmen of the 1770s and '80s had to sacrifice their material resources so as to make the Declaration of Independence a fact. The debt we owe to them they could never have foreseen. Are we ready in our day to make similar sacrifices of our means in order that future generations may have the free Churches that we cherish?

The Spiritual Foundations

The ideals of the Declaration of Independence did not spring full-blown from the mind of the great men who wrote it and adopted it. They were laid in long years of experience. So it is with the ideals of Congregationalism. Neither Robert Browne nor the "ministers and messengers of the Churches" at Cambridge, nor the "saints at Savoy" originated the principles of Congregationalism, which the Cheyenne meeting reaffirmed. They were grounded in the long, long past.

The fundamental truths which came to expression in the documents of the past are known to us. Necessary as it is to define and defend our polity, Congregationalism is more than a polity. It is founded on deep spiritual truths, and if we fail to live up to these, our cherished freedoms will fall.

Spiritual life is not limited to what is often called "the guidance of the Spirit." Too often, from Biblical days until now, it has been necessary to "try the spirits, whether they be of God." Honest men and some not so honest have been known to claim the guidance of the Spirit for deeds which were unworthy of Christians.

But some clear-cut standards may be found by which to "try the spirits" today. No deed which is done from selfish motives, no deed based on jealousy or hatred, no deed springing from an ill-considered emotional enthusiasm, is of the Spirit of God.

May the true Spirit guide our free Churches in the days to come! If we watch carefully and see that in our local Churches, in our Commission and Committee meetings, and in our annual assemblies of the National Association, we are living up to the ideals of true Christianity, not falling into the easy delusions which have led many a Christian and many a local Church away into the pitfalls of power and of pride, then and then only shall we be living up to the responsibilities we have so enthusiastically and devotedly taken upon ourselves.

OUR FELLOWSHIP, OUR FREEDOM, OUR FAITH

A Condensation of the Address by the Moderator, Max Strang, D.D.

Our Fellowship

It has been my privilege to see, during the past ten months, an infusion of reality into the hackneyed word, "fellowship." Many of our religious ideas lose their character through much usage. They become meretricious.

Such has been the case with the word, "fellowship." It has taken on ulterior meanings. It has been insincerely represented. The idea of fellowship has been represented as the necessitated togetherness of refugees, huddling in fear and forlornness. It has been represented as the compulsive togetherness of the "organization man," frenetically striving to achieve a quota, or feverishly struggling to maintain status. The idea of fellowship has been presented under the aspect of the togetherness of an ecclesiastical bloc, impersonally rating ministers and Churches according to the measure of "teamwork," they show in a "Conference Program."

The fellowship I have seen has been none of that. To the contrary, it has been a spontaneous togetherness, throbbing with reality. Repeatedly, across the continent, pastors and lay people have been aware of strong pulsations of concern, from distant centers of affectionate and prayerful regard, encouraging them to patience, to bravery, and to hope. North, south, east, west — wherever these Churches of our Association are to be found, one and all they have experienced a sense of awareness of each other, and of reliance upon each other; and, through this vital, uncompelled, sincere covenant of concern they have found their arms made strong to do and their hearts made brave to bear.

Now, it can be — and, please God, it may be — given to us here at Cheyenne to demonstrate once again the reality of that early Christian fellowship, and to restore meaning to a word, *agape*, which has been lost from Christian experience.

This is our strategic opportunity now; and more especially so since on July 4 last, a new denomination was established, and the General Council, as an instrument of fellowship of Congregational Christian Churches, on that date ceased to exist — a fact published to the whole world, and yet, strangely sought to be denied by some.

We here, therefore, assert that we are not only a National Association *of* Congregational Christian Churches, but are the National Association *for* Congregational Christian Churches. We here declare that in us the mainstream of Congregationalism, started by our Pilgrim Fathers, continues to flow. We claim all Congregational Christian Churches to be in our fellowship; and, without dissimulation, and without demand save only that of brotherly affection, our doors are open to everyone.

Our Freedom

This is a free fellowship. Those who are of it are not double-minded. They do not find it necessary to rationalize, for themselves or for anyone else, their motives for belonging to it. It does not carry a denominational name they seek to cloak, or are embarrassed to acknowledge. They happily, freely, without hyphenization or hybridization, know themselves to be a free fellowship of the Congregational way.

While this is a free fellowship, it is not an anarchic fellowship. To the contrary, it is the most rigorous, the most demanding, the most perilous, the most audacious fellowship it is given to men to experience. We, of this fellowship, are prepared to take the risks of that "liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free. . . ."

Our Faith

The free fellowship which I have seen the past ten months is one which is grounded in Jesus as Lord. To some that may mean that He is Sovereign; to others, that He is Leader; to others, that He is Teacher; and, to still others, that He is Saviour. But, to one and all it means that He is the beginning and the end, the center and the circumference, the sole and final authority. It means that in Him is to be found the true motive, method, and goal of life, both individual and social. It means that to Him every policy and every program must be referred.

It means that He will lead a steeper climb, will call for a sterner effort, than any human mind can contrive. It means that He will cast a heavier cross, but one easier to be borne because it is His, than ever a man himself can take up. It means that He demands a more complete consecration, a more active imagination, a steadier endurance, a more lasting faithfulness, a more piercing and inflexible self-criticism, than any religious convention can formulate.

Faithful men and women have fairly faced the alternatives to this free fellowship under Christ. We call to mind Warren Archibald, Henry Lee, Hugh Elmer Brown, Clair Roberts, Horatio Ford, Hermann Ruoff, Ed Arnos, Richard Plock, Gladys Kennedy, Dorothy Lyon, of sainted memory; and others still amongst us; who weighed self-interest against conviction, popularity against principle, and made their decision. Unafraid, humble before Him who is Lord, but unable to compromise before men, with singlemindedness and high hearts, they determined that once again the attempt shall be made to demonstrate that He lives, that He reigns, that He only is Head of the Church, and that He alone is Lord of that which is, and of that which is to be.

A visitor in a military hospital in World War II stopped at the bedside of a soldier invalided back from Mesopotamia.

Asking the soldier where he got his wound, the invalid, in broadest Scotch, replied, " 'Twas twa miles on the Rothiemurchus-side o' Baghdad." In a fantastic world of hate and death, three thousand miles away, the soldier oriented himself by reference to his Highland home under the knees of Cairgnorms. Starting from there in his thinking, he was able to pin-point himself wherever he chanced to be.

I offer that as a parable of warning and of hope. If we ignore Him as our constant point of reference, we shall lose our way and wander in confusion and error, as others have done. If we hold fast to Him, and to each other through Him, we can but go forward in strength and to good purpose.

WHITHER THE REFORMATION?

Rev. Emerson E. Emke, Detroit, Michigan

Many Protestants have become rightly concerned about the future of the Reformation in our Christian civilization. They are disturbed by what seems to have been the hidden intent of the Ecumenical Movement in Protestantism, now becoming increasing vocal in America. At its inception this Movement appeared to support the idea of "Unity In Diversity," a Federation of Free Churches, with a unity of purpose inspired by the Holy Spirit. This, I believe, is the ideal of the famous Missionary, E. Stanley Jones, writer of a host of valuable books.

To the student of Church affairs it is now becoming clear that the Ecumenical Movement is heading in the direction of Institutional Conformity in the setting up of one large, unified, organic church headed by an episcopal, authoritarian structure, similar to that of the recently established Church of South India. Conversations between leaders of the Triennial Meeting of the National Council of Churches in California during the first week of last December point in this direction of thought. To implement such a scheme on a wide scale the autonomy of the local Churches will be forced to yield to a Power Structure, if such super-church is to function smoothly. With the departure of the Free Church idealism will go much of what the Sixteenth Century Reformation stood for, and most of that which Congregationalism has always cherished. The efficiency attained by such an ecclesiastical structure is more than cancelled out by "The Freedom Of The Christian Man" secured in the freedom of individual worship in Free Churches.

Recent merger movements here and across the seas are viewed as steps toward this One Great Church. Each merger, it will be noted, is away from the idea of the Free Church toward a more centralized Power Structure, unknown in Congregationalism. Is this a plan to clear the land and prepare the soil for what is to come later? Leaders know the difficulties in "softening" the stubborn will of many people who stand in their way.

A Drive To Undo The Reformation

The question we ask is this — "Is there a planned and secret drive to undo the Reformation?" Will future ages tell of the Protestant Counter-Reformation Movement of the Twentieth Century? A book written some years ago by Dr. Charles Clayton Morrison, former editor of the CHRISTIAN CENTURY, entitled "The Unfinished Reformation", first aroused in me the hope that here would be outlined practical suggestions for carrying forward to a greater degree the liberating Spirit of the founders of the Reformation. Now I see in this book a deliberate attempt to head off spiritual freedom, and to channel religious devotion into another orthodoxy which may in future times place fetters on our children's children.

Dr. Morrison refers to "the sin of denominationalism," as though to think freely in religion is sinful. He appears so fixed on the one idea of Bigness, and One Church, that he fails to see virtue in the idea of "Unity In Diversity" which is achieved, not by organization, but by the working of the Holy Spirit in men's hearts.

I am not intending here a brief for the divisiveness of Protestantism; nevertheless, we must not forget what a European has said of the strength of American Protestantism, that its power is derived from the diversity of its appeal. Its vigor stems from the Freedom to Agree, as well as to Differ, both of which speak well for our system. Take these away, and you will have dull conformity, inconsistent with the Spirit of the Gospel. Freedom of Faith is the dearest child of the Reformation. Any correction of the excesses of freedom is another matter of concern to be dealt with at a later time. As the matter stands, more dangerous than sectarianism in Protestantism is our yielding to sacerdotalism, or any system which presumes to decide for you what is Destructive Error.

Much Is At Stake

Congregational Christian Churches have much at stake in this entire matter of the Merger, in that they stand to lose their status as Free Churches, at least, in the sense of traditional Congregationalism. They will be most limited in areas where they have been most free, namely, in controlling the destiny of the denomination. Henceforth, this will be vested in a Power Structure unfamiliar to Congregationalists. All that is necessary to see that the United Church is another denomination, not exactly Congregational, is to note carefully all the limitations upon the local church to be found in the Constitution and the By-Laws. It will be discovered that the autonomy promised in Paragraph 21 cannot be what it claims to be.

We must be wary, also, of the magic often found in words, such as in the word, "United". To many persons who are "joiners" it has a special appeal. To others it suggests progress. Actually, those who vote to enter the United Church may find there less of the Spirit of Unity than they had anticipated. They may find two sets of church leaders each bent on fulfilling commitments made to its constituents prior to the Union. Each group participating in the Merger has been told it will lose nothing "essential." Obviously, in view of the great differences in what are regarded as "essentials," there is certain to be trouble.

Let us not be deceived in thinking that the Constitution of the United Church is a simple and clear document, that "He Who Runs May Read." Those who have studied it closely have found it "loaded" with veiled meaning, so much so, that lawyers have had to be employed to interpret it. Like any legal document it is necessary that it be in harmony with Law. One thing is clear — the rights of the minority in a democracy are always protected, particularly in church matters. Above the decision of a majority always stands the Law to guarantee the vested rights even of individuals, which may be threatened by the majority. Continually, the Supreme Court is being asked to adjudicate for minority groups to uphold the Law of the land.

Has The Time For Free Churches "Arrived"?

Has the Protestant Reformation of the 16th Century run its course? If so, what follows? Is it no longer advisable to rely on Free Spirit, even the Holy Spirit?

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ARE WE STILL PROTESTANTS?

Dr. John Joseph Stoudt, Norristown, Pennsylvania

Must the institutional church stand between man and God or can man approach his God directly?

The proposals lately made by church leaders for the creation of a "Reformed and Catholic" church which, they suggest, should be fashioned by organic union of Protestant groups, put into sharp focus an old question: are we still Protestant?

The difference between the Roman and Protestant forms of Christianity lies in the question whether the organization or the experience comes first. Romans assert that the Church — with capital "C" — mediates the experience while Protestants believe that given the experience the church follows. Romans assert that their church, directly deriving from the keys which the Lord gave to Peter, mediates grace through its sacramental and institutional life and that there can be no grace without this church. Protestants, both Lutheran and Calvinist, assert that we first experience grace, become conscious of having been justified by faith, and that from this experience, when shared, the fellowship of Christians comes. Thus Romans assert the essentiality of the organic institution while Protestants believe — or, at least, once believed — that the church is a voluntary society of those who are conscious of having experienced grace.

This distinction has deep implications in the fields of ethics, doctrine and the devotional life as well as in the practical implications of our religious faith.

Furthermore, under the pervasive impact of Ritschlian theology — and no one theologian seems to have had greater practical influence on modern American religious thought — our leaders seem to have become convinced that there can be no Christian faith apart from conscious connection with the organic institution. The key passage in Ritschl is this: "We are able to know and understand God, sin, conversion, eternal life, in the Christian sense, only so far as we consciously and intentionally reckon ourselves members of the community which Christ has founded." While this passage, when taken in its context, is still Protestant in spirit, it has none the less opened the floodgates for a new spirit to emerge, one which is very much in evidence — that spirit which would reduce Christian life to ecclesiastical politics. For when we "consciously and intentionally" reckon ourselves part of the community which Christ has founded, and when this is set up as the criterion for our full membership in Christ's Body, then, sadly, we have reduced the Christian religion to churchmanship. Instead of a gathering of believers we have created an association of ecumenical engineers.

So, in all seriousness we have to raise the old question again: are we still Protestant? We must pose to the leaders of the great American denominations which still think they are Protestant because they are not within the Roman fellowship, whether they are, *in spirit,* in the tradition of the Reformers? Do they still think that the individual believer knows God's grace first, and then, with others like him, forms a fellowship of those who have shared God's grace? Or, do they believe, in consequence of Ritschlian theology, that there can be no grace except that which comes through and from an institutional church? Or, to put it simply, must the institutional church stand between man and God or can man approach his God directly? This is the issue which separates Roman from Protestant.

Perhaps we stand on the threshold of a new reformation? Perhaps we have come to see the emergence of the great monolithic, centralized religious corporation for which policies are determined by a Board of Directors who then hand them down to the local clergy to peddle to the man in the pew? Perhaps the great protest has died?

But there are still some Christians in this land for whom no ecclesiastical Board of Directors can speak. There are those lonely souls who know from first hand experience that their Redeemer lives.

These Christians do not oppose the increase of the area where the love of God is known, nor do they oppose the ecumenical movement. But they do believe, and that with fervency, that God comes to man without benefit of clergy, that no top-heavy institution of busy ecclesiastics can stand between them and the gracious, saving love of God.

Are we still Protestant? Church leaders may have followed the logic of John Henry Newman without following him back to the bosom of Rome; but there are still those who do believe that the fellowship of believers is founded on the one rock — the Jesus Christ of their hearts.

(Reprinted by permission, from THE MINISTERS' QUARTERLY, Summer, 1961.)

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Must Organization Man supplant Free Man? Where is now our Faith in Democracy, which has largely accounted for the greatness of our country? The criticism is that competition among denominations is sapping the vitality of our Christian witness in America. Contrary to the view that centralized power in the Church is necessary for vitality, let me remind you of a European traveller's explanation of the vigor of Protestantism in America. He commented that it is because of denominationalism, and the idea of the Free Church that interest in the Gospel has been maintained. In such a church freedom encourages participation rather than dull acquiescence and conformity. Are we forgetting that many of our greatest spiritual gains have come in the century when religious individualism was at its height?

It was during that century that the American Board was formed, the American Missionary Association began its widespread educational program, and the fight to liberate Congregationalism from Unitarianism took place. The Free Church Movement born of the Reformation has not passed its zenith. Indeed, it has not yet come to its own. Its completion is not backward, but forward; it is not advanced by a return to entrenched power, but by a deepening of its democracy.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION PILGRIM FELLOWSHIP

Summer Activities

VISITORS AT JOHN ROBINSON MEMORIAL

The National Association Pilgrim Fellowship party under the leadership of Rev. Robert H. Scanland of Pomona, California, spent a most inspiring weekend at Gainsborough, England, whence had come some of those earliest Congregationalist pioneers whose memory we all hold in reverence.

Travelling by a "Dormobile" from London, they were received at Gainsborough by the pastor of the John Robinson Memorial Congregational Church, the Reverend John Flack. After seeing the "Old Hall" in which it is believed that the non-conformists held their first services in secret, they also were taken to the first Separatist church in Gainsborough, in Little Church Lane, and during their week-end visited Austerfield, Scrooby, and other places whose names are familiar in early Congregational history. The homes of William Brewster and William Bradford were of particular interest.

The Sunday evening service at the John Robinson Memorial Church on July 16 was conducted by the Reverend Mr. Flack, assisted by Charles Disselhorst and Barbara Weiland of the Pilgrim Fellowship group. Mr. Scanland preached the sermon. The American young people were deeply impressed by the cordiality

of their reception here, as had been the case in their fortnight at the Pilgrim Fathers Memorial Church in Southwark, London, where Rev. Katherine Mitchell, pastor, and Dr. Albert D. Belden, had welcomed them and helped them in their understanding of the history of free Congregationalism and the problems it faces today.

PIEDMONT WORK CAMP

Packing for Piedmont
July 1961

Again an earnest and energetic group of Christian young people from the National Association Pilgrim Fellowship have given of their time and energy in volunteer labor on the grounds and buildings of Piedmont College, Demorest, Georgia. Late in July these young people headed South from various Northern states, with the purpose of helping and learning. The two-week Work Camp schedule included time for field trips to study the traditions, folk lore and problems of the South, and for daily study of the Christian Life manual, "What Am I Living For?"

The trailer shown in the picture started from Norwich, Connecticut, with a load of 750 pounds of clothing for the Thrift Shop and 350 pounds of books, many of which were reference books on electrical engineering for the Piedmont Library. These books were donated by Joseph French of Norwich, a nephew of a former president of the college.

In the photo are Rev. and Mrs. Myron R. Bunnell and Misses Joanne Eccles and Patricia Sauer of the United Congregational Church of Norwich, one of the most active Churches in the work of the National Association.

Congregational Bookshelf

Rev. Royal G. Davis, Los Angeles, California

What can one man do against the multitude? The biography of Dr. Judd, one of the early missionaries to Hawaii provides an encouraging answer. The single individual can accomplish miracles if he dedicates his talents and energies to the highest and best.

Dr. Judd was a founding father of the Fiftieth State because he dared to follow in the footsteps of the Biblical heroes: Abraham who sought a far country, Moses who became a servant of God, Amos who challenged the forces of evil in high places, and Jesus who went about doing good for all.

In the Sandwich Islands this meant opposing the internationalist ambitions of the sailors and diplomats, improving the agriculture of the area, serving as an honest minister to the king and the court as well as vigorously defending the best interests of the citizens as free men made in the image of God.

John Hancock, the son of a Congregational minister, signed The Declaration of Independence. Dr. Judd in the same spirit was courageous enough to oppose alien interference and save Hawaii for the United States. The latest state in our Union is as much a testimonial to Congregational principles as New England. What we did in the 17th century we did in the 19th and we shall continue to do so long as the individual is important and voluntary cooperation is made a basic principle. DR. JUDD, HAWAII'S FRIEND, University of Hawaii Press, by Gerrit P. Judd IV, $7.00.

Glorious Independents

Elizabeth Laughton Claxton
Lansing, Michigan

The first Glorious Independents of our Faith were those little groups of people ("two or three gathered together in my name"), their covenant being the remembered words of the departed Master. He was their only leader. Well may we wish that we could blot out the ensuing years of theological controversy and ecclesiastical government, returning to this original "congregational" way.

They had the one leader who could be trusted completely — Christ Himself. All human leadership, no matter how fine, is human, and subject to the mistakes of mankind. Even kings have followed church leaders down corridors of disaster. The crusades give us some tragic stories of idealists, hoping to rescue the Holy Land from infidels, being used by unscrupulous men of high office. The gains of organization and bigness can blind the individual to wrongs that he would not commit in a smaller group.

The crusades belong to far away times, before the reformations within and without the formally organized church. Coming much closer to our own day, and into our own history, we can see people who followed good but mistaken human leadership.

Organization can accomplish great things, and that is why men are enticed into unfortunate forms of it. After 1690, in England, when the non-conformists, both Puritan and Separatist, dared to come out of hiding, they found themselves divided into groups with two types of government, presbyterial and congregational. In spirit they seemed to be one. Their leaders decided they could unite. The "Heads of Agreement" drawn up by the United Ministers sound very reasonable:

"Though we differ about the first subject of the power of the Keys (i.e., as to the seat of authority in church administration) yet forasmuch as we all agree, That the affairs of the Church are to be managed by the Officers thereof, thereafter we conclude that the examination and determination of things in cases of admission and rejection, and other church acts, shall be permitted by the Officers; yet so that the people have notice of what they resolve and conclude upon, in matters of moment, that in case anything be done against which the people may (upon probable grounds at least) object from the word of God, it may either be forborne, or their satisfaction endeavoured. . . ."*

However, a theological controversy developed almost immediately and the people saw the difference between rule by elders or presbyters and rule by local congregations. The union of their trusted leaders was not acceptable to the lay people.

At the Albany Convention of Congregational Churches in 1852, famous for the establishment of the Congregational Church Building Society, a piece of business less talked of today, but at this hour very important to us, was done. It points up how the mistake of the English ministers was repeated a century later in this country. Back in 1802, a "Plan of Union" for the westwardly moving frontier had been devised by the leaders of Congregationalism and Presbyterianism in New England. By the middle of the century, not only were the Congregationalists who had moved west disappointed in the results of the effort, but the Presbyterians were fighting among themselves, some wanting to adhere to the free government of Congregationalism, and others demanding the authority of the "Old Synod." They were happy, it seems, to have the Congregationalists abandon the whole plan at the Albany meeting.

The early Christians remembered the words of the Master, "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold." They understood that all followers of Christ can be one in spirit without being driven together in an authoritarian and very human yoke. Like His first followers, should our trust not be in the one divine leader, Jesus Christ?

*Chapter 14, page 454, "The Creeds and Platforms of Congregationalism" by Williston Walker.

(Editor's Note. *This essay, summing up some of the facts expressed or implied in the preceding ones entitled "Glorious Independents," brings the series by Mrs. Claxton to a close. In our next issue we shall begin another series on "Famous Congregationalists" by Dr. Arvel M. Steece of Old Saybrook, Connecticut.*)

WOMEN'S WORK

MRS. ROBERT E. COLLINS, Chairman
1014 FLORAL DRIVE, S.E., GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

PLYMOUTH CENTER

Miss Mary Truesdell, Plymouth Church, Minneapolis

Six years ago our church started a new venture. There were no precedents for the work and no patterns to follow — but it has proved to be one of the most exciting and unifying experiences in our history. It was the outcome of our geographic location. The past years had seen a drastic change in the community picture. Our church, originally built in a residential section of the city within walking distance of many of its members, found itself, due to the trek to the suburbs and the steady march of business up the avenue, a down-town church and consequently the whole church picture had changed. Our membership was, for the most part, no longer made up of people who lived around the church. Some of our more forward-looking members recognized this and began to ask what the needs of this changed community were and if we were being of service.

A Social Action Group from the church met with the principal of the local school and the head of the neighborhood house to discuss the situation. They unearthed some unpleasant truths. The community, heavily populated with children living for the most part in substandard housing with inadequate recreational facilities and too easy access to certain undesirable businesses, was a potential juvenile delinquent neighborhood with minor delinquency already on the march. The outcome of the three-way conference was a venture entered into jointly by the church, the school and the neighborhood house — the aim being to get the children off the streets and provide them with a place where they could feel secure and wanted. The groups are purposely kept small (we wish we could handle more) but these are emotionally-disturbed children and as such need much individual attention. The school refers to the Center those children in need of help. The neighborhood house supplies the leaders and the programs, and the church the rooms and financial backing.

A Real Challenge

From the beginning this work was a real challenge. These disturbed children needed the center — furthermore they needed to attend regularly to derive any real benefit from the work, yet there was no compulsion. It was up to the leaders to make things so alluring that they wanted to come and yet at the same time preserve some sort of discipline. A group of children who have been in school all day and are at long last free to make "whoopee" presents some problems. When these children are emotionally disturbed the problems are, of course, much greater.

At Plymouth Center the young children meet in the daytime and the teen-agers in the evening. Work with the latter group is especially important since they are the age to gather on street corners and band together into gangs if left to their own devices. Many things have been tried by way of diversion — games, outings (horse-back riding and swimming and visiting parks) handicrafts and putting on plays. The children themselves have many good ideas. They are encouraged to have them and the leaders often follow their suggestions. The Women's Organizations have raised money for summer camperships — put on special holiday parties and made Christmas gifts. Their response has been wonderful and it has been good for the children to know of their interest.

Growth and Progress

The Center is now six years old. We've had many trials and tribulations but we have been evolving and growing all the time and in the growing many changes have taken place. The first change is, I think, in the philosophy of the leaders who six years ago were feeling their way and primarily interested in getting the children off the streets. With the stabilizing of the project they are now taking the long view and making an effort to interest the mothers and correct the home life, recognizing that this is where the trouble starts.

Another important change is in the hiring of a full-time director. Up until now we have had only part-time leaders. These leaders have worked long and hard and sacrificed much — but they have had two jobs. The third change (and this too is an important one) is in the purchase of the house across the street from the church. It is at present being used to house the Center. The children have taken great pride in it. They have worked to clean and furnish it. Early this spring they had an "Open House" for their mothers and leaders. The children themselves acted as hostesses and did a very creditable job. They feel the house is their own in a way that the church was not and they are learning something about responsibility. This step is pretty new to evaluate but so far it seems good.

And finally for the fourth, last, and perhaps most important change. Plymouth started this venture but recognized it had only made a beginning. However, community interest in our project has been great. In the last few months several other down-town churches and some businessmen have become interested and eager to help, with the result that a new board has been formed with representatives from all. It is too soon to predict how much the program will now be able to expand with this new board and increased resources but there are high hopes for the future. Since juvenile delinquency is not a local matter but of world-wide concern, it is our hope that the story of our struggle with this problem may prove helpful to other churches.

FROM THE OLD COUNTRY

Rev. Albert D. Belden, D.D., F. Ph. S., London

Greetings to all my friends in the National Association of American Congregational Churches, and to the Churches themselves! As the situation now appears from the Old Country, those Churches are now faced definitely with the solemn task of consolidating themselves into the new Congregational Denomination of the United States of America. We hope fervently, here, that the uncommitted Congregational Churches will rally swiftly to the Association's support and provide a stronger nucleus on which there may be built a greater Congregationalism than existed before the merger. It is a great and noble challenge, but such challenges produce great and noble men and women for their overcoming.

I have just had the great pleasure of sharing in the visit of nine young Congregationalists from your Churches in five states, to the Pilgrim Fathers' Memorial Church, Southwark, London. We have had a truly great time together and I desire to bear my testimony to the high intelligence, the perfectly good behaviour, the charm and the zeal of these young ambassadors of yours. If they are a true sample of the Youth of the Churches of the Association, then you are to be greatly congratulated and a fine future for the Association is predictable. The Rev. Robert Scanland of Pomona, California, made a powerful and effective leader of the group.

There are signs of movement at last among the Congregational ministers of England and Wales in strong opposition to the proposal of Commission 1 to substitute the idea of One Congregational Church for the historic designation "Congregational Churches." It is to be devoutly hoped, however, that the very tentative approach made as yet towards the Presbyterianizing of English Congregationalism, will not be carried to the point of breaking the denomination, as in your own case. The matter is supposed to be under solemn debate in our Churches, but it is difficult to discern much activity in that direction — the coming winter months will show. The danger of apathy in the Churches, even if it rests on opposition, is that through official pressures at the center, steps may be taken that tend to commit the Churches. We shall see.

We, in the Old Country, who are like-minded with yourselves, ask your prayers on our behalf.

"IDEAS ON LIBERTY"

The Importance of the Means

Let no man turn aside . . . from the broad path of honor, on the plausible pretext that he is justified by the goodness of his end. All good ends can be worked out by good means. Those that cannot are bad; and may be counted so at once, and left alone.

— Charles Dickens *"Barnaby Rudge"*

OUR DEVOTIONAL COLUMN

Rev. William N. Randall, Sharon, Pennsylvania

Slogans are used by manufacturers to promote their products. Religious phrases are also useful to instill faith in the hearts of men. One phrase that has encouraged Christians to pray during times of stress is "Keep looking up."

When all is going well we say, "There's not a cloud in the sky," and we sing, "Blue skies are smiling at me, nothing but blue skies do I see."

To some people, dark clouds are omens of judgment or doom.

Regardless of present circumstances, when the Christian looks up to the clouds he is reminded of the wisdom and power of God. The clouds speak of the presence of God and the promise of blessing.

We are reminded of the mercy of God. After the flood God said, "And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth that the bow shall be seen in the *cloud* . . . and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh."

If our hearts are heavy because of weakness in time of temptation, we can look up and know that God is merciful.

When we feel that we have lost our sense of direction, we can look up and know that God will lead us.

When the children of Israel traveled through the wilderness, the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a *cloud* to lead them in the way and by night in a pillar of fire.

The clouds speak of the presence of God. We are reminded of the manifestation of God's presence in the temple when the ark was brought to the House of God. "And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place, that the *cloud* filled the house of God."

Though world situations are often distressing and doubts come to the hearts of men, when we keep looking up we have the assurance that God is the ruler yet and that righteousness shall triumph.

We have the promise that Christ who was taken up in a cloud shall come in like manner as He went into heaven. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the *clouds,* to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." (I Thessalonians 4: 16, 17.)

Though clouds may be dark, keep looking up. The future is as bright as the promises of God.

PRAYER: Eternal God our Father, as we observe the beauty of Thy creation, we are drawn to Thee, especially as we look to the skies. We are conscious that every good and perfect gift cometh from above. Looking to Thee we ask that Thou wouldst lift us above all influences that would hinder us from loving Thee and serving Thee with all of our strength. In Jesus' name. Amen.

ANNUAL MEETING NOTES

The present and past Executive Secretaries and all the present and past Moderators and Vice Moderators of The National Association. Photo by Louis Fulmer, Cheyenne.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION COMMISSION

From the Christian Education Commission comes one request and five recommendations.

The request is that you share with us, for the sake of all member Churches, any units, courses or programs which you have developed and found to be helpful in your own Church. Such sharing is in the mood and way of our Congregational free, concerned and responsible fellowship.

Our recommendations to you are these:

1. That you *become aware* of what materials are being taught in your Church Schools.

2. That you *evaluate* them in the light of the objectives you have for your children, youth and adults. (As a possible help in this area, we are sending out a set of objectives used by one of our Churches, as a springboard for your thinking and discussion.)

3. That you move to *develop* a year by year course of study consistent with your objectives and the beliefs of your own Church. (Curriculum materials have a background theology. Do you know what it is in the materials you use? And is this what you believe? The Kindergarten and Junior High charts prepared by our Commission indicate the position of publishing houses. Some may be used interchangeably, others would be in conflict.)

4. That you *provide* your children of every age with one unit at least, of THE CONGREGATIONAL HERITAGE material, prepared by our commission. (Ages four and five ready for the fall packet; Primary was sent out in the Spring; Junior and Junior High being developed; and Senior High ready by Christmas. Junior can be developed from Plimouth Plantation material sent out.)

5. That you teach classes on "The Congregational Way of Life" from Junior Highs through adults, based on Arthur Rouner's book and George Brown's *Study Guide*. We suggest that these classes be sometime between January and June, from ten to sixteen sessions.

This study guide is a careful and thorough fifty page lead book with documentation and supplementary materials for use with the prize-winning book. We believe this to be a major and significant contribution of our Commission and hope you will plan to order and use it extensively, raising your Church members' understanding of our heritage and their feeling of responsibility for its future.

Plan to use the film, "The Pilgrim Story" (from National Association office) for a family night in November; or another, "We Came This Way." Both received high praise at the previews in Cheyenne.

(Reported by Mrs. H. D. Gray)

PUBLICATIONS COMMISSION

Congregationalists have the enviable reputation of a pioneering spirit, creative thinking, and enthusiasm, all of which prevailed at the Annual Meeting of the National Association in Cheyenne, Wyoming. The invigorating climate, the feeling of spaciousness in that section of our great country, the inspiring beauty of our host Church, and the heart-warming graciousness of its pastor and membership added immeasurably to this spirit.

The Commission on Publications reflected the positive climate as the members and visitors thoughtfully discussed the future role of the National Association in the Protestant community. It was understood that all publications from the National Association will serve not only the member Churches of the N.A.C.C.C., but will in fact be its voice to all other denominations. Readers of THE CONGREGATIONALIST will note in future issues the effects of decisions reached during the Commission meetings.

The Chairman, Dr. Henry David Gray, presented the first copies of the booklet "What It Means To Be A Member Of A Congregational Christian Church" to carry the emblem of the CONGREGATIONAL PRESS on the back cover. Future publications will carry the new design.

Among the significant publications which will be available in the near future are: "The Pursuit Of An Idea" by Dr. Howard Conn; a National Association Handbook (for the use of Churches and Ministers); and a series of pamphlets covering various aspects of Congregational Christian Church life. The first of the series is now available and is entitled "The Meaning Of The Meetinghouse," written by the Reverend Arthur A. Rouner, Jr.

Also just off the press is the booklet "For Such A Time As This," edited by Dr. John Claxton, Assistant Chairman of the Publications Commission. The booklet is a helpful guide for Congregationalists seeking fellowship with others of kindred mind and spirit.

Continued on page 11

NEW ENGLAND MEETINGS

New England Fellowship. The First Christian Church and the First Congregational Church of Wolfeboro, New Hampshire will be hosts to the organizing meeting of the New England Congregational Christian Fellowship on Monday and Tuesday, October 16-17. The formation of this Fellowship was voted at a meeting held last June at the Park Street Church in Boston. Invitations have been mailed out to all the Congregational Christian Churches in the six states which have not become parts of the United Church of Christ, and a large attendance is expected. Some of the sessions will be held in the newly renovated First Christian Church and some in the First Congregational building.

STATE FELLOWSHIPS

As announced in the September CONGREGATIONALIST, the Massachusetts Congregational Fellowship which was launched at a meeting at the Wachogue Community Congregational Church in Springfield on July 16, will hold another meeting at the same place on Sunday afternoon October 8. People from the Congregational Churches in all parts of the Commonwealth are expected to attend. Rev. Howard E. Munson of Springfield is Moderator of the new Fellowship.

New Hampshire. The Executive Committee of the New Hampshire League to Preserve Congregationalism met on August 7 at the Robinson Homestead overlooking Lake Winnesquam, Laconia, New Hampshire, guests of Dr. and Mrs. Robinson Smith. After a delightful luncheon served under the trees, Rev. Arthur W. Childs of Troy, Chairman of the Executive Committee, called the meeting to order.

The principal business of the day concerned plans for forming a New Hampshire Congregational Christian Fellowship. A meeting for this purpose will be held in the near future, probably prior to the New England Fellowship meeting scheduled for Wolfeboro, New Hampshire, on October 16-17.

Courtesy of the *Laconia Evening Citizen*

New Hampshire Executive Board

Members and guests were present from Alton, Brookline, Chichester, Concord, Exeter, Hancock, Keene, Laconia, Manchester, North Weare, Pittsfield, Tilton, Troy, and Wolfeboro. Rev. and Mrs. Joseph J. Russell of Melrose, Massachusetts, were also present.

(*Reported by Carl E. Clifford, Brookline, New Hampshire*)

ANNUAL MEETING

Continued from page 10

The Commission voted in favor of the eventual reprinting of three Congregational classics:

1. The sermon, "On Christian Liberty," by Gaius Glenn Atkins.
2. The sermon, "Platform of Ecclesiastical Government," by Nathaniel Emmons, and
3. "Christian Freedom," by Albert Peel.

The Commission is deeply aware of its heavy responsibility in making available to the members of our Churches the finest quality printed material available both as to format and content, and thus maintain the high standards of spiritual depth and intellectual inquiry for which Congregationalists are known.

The members of the Publications Commission are: Dr. Henry David Gray, Chairman; Dr. John W. Claxton, Assistant Chairman; Miss Evelyn Bumgarner; Dr. Howard Conn; Mrs. Robert L. Richardson; Rev. Arthur A. Rouner, Jr.; Mrs. James E. Solberg; Dr. Arvel M. Steece; Mr. Robert Sterenborg; and Rev. Joseph J. Russell, Ex-officio. All members were present at the Cheyenne meeting.

(Reported by Mrs. James E. Solberg)

The New Officers

The Nominating Committee's slate for new officers and members of the Executive Committee was adopted unanimously, as follows: Moderator, Mr. Laurance E. Frost, Brooklyn, New York; Assistant Moderator, Rev. Raymond A. Waser, Pomona, California; Secretary, Mrs. Robert Reese, Los Angeles, California; Treasurer, Mr. Don E. Zentner, Wauwatosa, Wisconsin; Historian, Rev. Harry W. Johnson, D.D., Boise, Idaho. Executive Committee: Four year terms, Rev. George W. Brown, Jr., Fall River, Massachusetts; Mrs. Robert E. Collins, Grand Rapids, Michigan; Hon. Henry A. Middleton, Toledo, Ohio. To fill vacancies: Three year term, Rev. Myron R. Bunnell, Norwich, Connecticut; One year term, Rev. John H. Alexander, Wauwatosa, Wisconsin.

The Credentials Committee for 1962 consists of Mr. Norman A. Bast, Cleveland, Ohio; Mrs. Wayne Britten, Marshalltown, Iowa; Rev. William Randall, Sharon, Pennsylvania; Rev. Arthur W. Tiffen, Frankfort, Michigan; and a fifth member to be chosen by the host Church.

A complete list of the Commissions and Committees will be published in an early issue of THE CONGREGATIONALIST.

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NEWS NOTES

New Member Churches. The First Congregational Church of LaMoille, Illinois, and the Maize Congregational Church, Maize, Kansas, have voted to join the National Association.

Pastoral Changes. Rev. Herbert W. Dickerson has begun work at the Congregational Church of South Dennis, Massachusetts . . . Rev. Curtis C. Busby, Essex, Massachusetts, has accepted a call to the Riverpoint Congregational Church, West Warwick, Rhode Island . . . Rev. Warren Allen is the new pastor at Egg Harbor City Congregational Church, New Jersey . . . Greenville Congregational Church, Norwich, Connecticut, has called Rev. Clayton E. Richard of Calais, Maine . . . Rev. Seth W. Newton of Hollis, New Hampshire, has been called to the Florence Congregational Church, Northampton, Massachusetts.

A Correction. The meeting for the Congregational women of Maine which was announced in our September issue as for October 11 will be held on November 9 instead, at the Elm St. Congregational Church, Bucksport.

Offices Moved To Larger Quarters. The offices of the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches have been moved to larger quarters in the same building at 176 West Wisconsin Avenue, Milwaukee 3, Wisconsin.

THE TEN DOLLAR CLUB

Readers of the September CONGREGATIONALIST will remember the story on "First Fruits of the Ten Dollar Club", which told of the presentation of a check to the Fair Oak Congregational Church, Cedar Rapids, Iowa. This beginning of a good work can go on to better things through the generosity of those who join the Club. Please fill out the coupon below and forward to "The Ten Dollar Club", c/o National Association Commission on Missions and Church Extension, 176 West Wisconsin Ave., Milwaukee 3, Wisconsin.

I hereby apply to become a member of the $10 Club of the National Association. It is understood that I will send $10 each time that I am notified that dirt is being moved for the erection of a new Congregational Church of the National Association, but not to exceed three times a year. It is further understood that I may revoke my membership at any time if I so desire.

Name.....

Address.....

City.....*Zone*.....

Date.....

FROM THE LETTER BOX

Editor, THE CONGREGATIONALIST

Thank you for publishing the statement from Dr. Ben Herbster in the special summer CONGREGATIONALIST. Somehow it seemed to me that his fine words covered a studied semantic subtlety. They sound well. "It will be a matter of profound sorrow if ultimately there is a single church which does not *hold fast* to its *fellowship* with the *great body* of churches which have hitherto expressed their substantial *unity* in *faith* and *purpose*." The UCC Synod offers "every evidence of our desire for *Christian fellowship* with them and every service . . ." (*Italics added.*)

But: did the Churches hold fast to the fellowship when they split it, in a sense, and went off on a new track of compromise for unity's sake, of a new denomination, a reduced-freedom organization with "no further vote" restrictions? And who left any part of the hitherto expressed faith?

What is the boundary of the "great body" of churches formerly expressing substantial unity in faith and purpose? One thing Jesus came to do, according to the initial synagogue service of His ministry, in Nazareth, was to set men free. Such freedom is inextricably bound up with His being Lord supreme. If then certain churches want a hierarchy of authority and power and to dictate the directions of His faith and purpose, are we not getting bound again? What greater need is there than for us to "come out and be separate" so as to be free again?

Is the direction of the "great body" not toward the "greater body" of Rome? Is not the unity more supposed than real, being organic and not in spirit, truth and freedom under the Head?

Sincerity is good, but would sincerity bring a minister into the U.C.C. for standing if an Association had formerly refused him, or some key man had kept the matter from vote because, for example, the minister didn't favor the merger?

Canterbury, Connecticut (REV.) LEROY VICTOR CLEVELAND

Our Cover Picture. The Fellowship Hall of First Congregational Church, Cheyenne, Wyoming, was crowded to capacity at all the meals served during the National Association Annual Meeting. The remarkably efficient serving of excellent meals was a credit to the careful preparation and forethought of the committee in charge.

Cheyenne Pictures Available. Prints of the pictures taken by the official photographer at the Annual Meeting, showing various groups and characteristic gatherings, may be obtained from Rev. Leslie G. Deinstadt, 3501 Forest Drive, Cheyenne, Wyoming. The price is 50¢ per print, size 8" x 10".